

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 09204 191340Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 181625Z MAY 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2893

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ROME 9204

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: THE "WHITE PERIOD" AND THE THEORETICAL POSSIBILITY
OF NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: MCKINLEY-COBURN-KUCHEL TELCONS

1. DESPITE POLITICALLY UNSETTLING RECENT EVENTS SUCH AS
THE ESCALATION OF TERRORISM, THE ASSASSINATION OF ALDO MORO,
AND THE PCI SETBACK IN THE MAY 14 ADMINISTRATIVE
ELECTIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS REGARD THE POSSIBILITY OF
CONVENING NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF
THE "WHITE PERIOD" AS UNDESIRABLE AND VERY REMOTE.
THE "WHITE PERIOD" REFERS TO THE INABILITY OF THE ITALIAN
PRESIDENT UNDER ART. 88 OF THE CONSTITUTION TO DISSOLVE
PARLIAMENT DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS OF HIS TERM OF OFFICE.
IN LEONE'S CASE, THE PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE TO DISSOLVE
PARLIAMENT BEFORE JUNE 24 IN ORDER TO CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS.
HE CAN THEORETICALLY EXERCISE THAT POWER UP TO THE EVE OF
THE SIX-MONTH "WHITE PERIOD."

2. ACCORDING TO ART. 61 OF THE CONSTITUTION, NEW
ELECTIONS MUST TAKE PLACE WITHIN 70 DAYS OF THE DISSOLU-
TION OF PARLIAMENT. LAW AND REGULATION PROVIDE THAT A MINI-
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MUM NOTIFICATION PERIOD OF 45 DAYS MUST TRANSPIRE
PRIOR TO THE HOLDING OF AN ELECTION.

3. AFTER THE WHITE PERIOD BEGINS, NEW PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS WOULD STILL THEORETICALLY BE POSSIBLE
SHOULD PRESIDENT LEONE DECIDE TO RESIGN. IN THE
CASE OF RESIGNATION OR INCAPACITY, THE ELECTION OF

A NEW PRESIDENT MUST COMMENCE WITHIN 15 DAYS. THE
NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT COULD THEN THEORETICALLY
DISSOLVE THE CHAMBERS AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS. GARDNER

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